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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [TO](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: TOGO: APRIL 5 MEETING WITH EX-MINISTER BOKO

REF: A. PARIS 1118
[1](#)B. 05 PARIS 4103
[1](#)C. PARIS 1919

PARIS 00002348 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reason
1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Togo's ex-Interior Minister Francois Boko said during an April 5 meeting that the regime in Togo feared active U.S. intervention in Togo's affairs and that the U.S. could readily influence events in Togo if it chose to do so, and even compel the leadership to step down, as in Haiti and Liberia. The U.S. could, for example, demand that the GOT investigate the deaths of those who died during the April 2005 elections and insist that it do something about drugs and arms trafficking. Togo's fear of the U.S. makes it very unlikely that any damage will be done to USG properties/personnel in Togo. Boko recounted his failure to meet with Gilchrist Olympio, whom he deemed "more of a guru than a political leader." The GOT has become more overt in threatening Boko, and he has obtained some cooperation from the French for his and his family's protection. END SUMMARY.

U.S. INFLUENCE

[1](#)2. (C) On April 5, we met with Francois Boko, Togo's Interior Minister until April 2005. Our last meeting took place in February (ref A). Boko emphasized the potential power the U.S. could wield in Togo. He said the Gnassingbe clan had always expressed fear and concern that the U.S. might turn attention to Togo and exert pressure. Eyadema, Boko said, had feared that the U.S. would someday do to Togo what Eyadema believed the U.S. had done in Haiti and Liberia, which was to tell Aristide in Port-au-Prince and Charles Taylor in Monrovia: "OK, your time's up, we've had enough. It's time for you to go." Boko cited several occasions when Eyadema had told his inner circle to back off certain projects for fear of attracting unwanted attention from the U.S., one being the drug smuggling case described ref B. Another incident involved the issuance of a diplomatic passport to a Togolese known to be in disfavor with the USG (whom Boko did not identify). Eyadema instructed that the passport not be issued, to avoid "complications with the Americans."

[1](#)4. (C) Because of this fear, Boko said that it would be very unlikely under the present regime that any harm would ever intentionally come to USG properties or personnel in Togo. He said that the burning down of the German cultural center at the time of the 2005 elections in Togo could not happen to a U.S. facility. If such a thing happened, Togo's leaders feared that the next day a U.S. aircraft carrier would appear off-shore and launch all manner of retaliation against Togo and its leaders. "They have learned what your military is capable of doing and that Washington seems less

hesitant to use force than was perhaps the case in the past," Boko remarked.

15. (C) Boko said that the U.S. could exploit this fear to produce positive change in Togo. Although acknowledging that "perhaps Togo is not your highest priority," Boko suggested a number of steps. The U.S. could send a "strong message with a hint of menace" to Togo and demand that its human rights, anti-corruption efforts, and good-governance practices improve. It could demand that Togo undertake, in cooperation with outside legal authorities, a complete investigation of drug and arms smuggling involving Togo. The U.S. could initiate UN Security Council action to demand an investigation of the hundreds of deaths that took place during the 2005 elections. Boko said that the more direct and insistent the U.S. appeared, the more Togo's leaders might feel inclined to cooperate.

16. (C) The Department's annual Human Rights Report on Togo also made a big impression. Togo's leaders dreaded its appearance, Boko said, and had put in place a mechanism to produce a quick response showing how the HRR was "wrong." Boko said that he found the reports "90 percent" accurate ("you could hardly expect 100 percent accuracy") regarding individual cases, but that more importantly, it presented an accurate global picture of a dismal human rights situation.

GILCHRIST OLYMPIO

17. (C) We informed Boko, without going into detail, that we had met recently with Paris-based opposition leader Gilchrist Olympio (ref C). Boko said his frustrations with Olympio continued, most of which centered on Olympio's belief that he, Olympio, embodied the opposition and was the only opposition figure who mattered. However, Boko believed Olympio did not function as a political leader should. Olympio operated on the assumption that the Togolese exile

PARIS 00002348 002.2 OF 003

community should come to him, express loyalty and gratitude, and adopt his positions without quibbling. Unfortunately, Boko continued, Olympio never seemed to take action or inspire others to take action. His view of himself as opposition leader rested mainly on his decades' old belief that the Gnassingbes illegally stripped power from the Olympios and that Gilchrist was the only proper heir to a claim to power in Togo. Expressing his frustration, Boko said "he's more like a guru. We don't need a guru but rather an active political leader." He remarked dryly that Olympio and Eyadema shared the same birthday (December 26), although Eyadema was born three years before Olympio.

18. (C) Boko said that because of comments we had made at our last meeting, he had decided he should seek a meeting with Olympio, which he tried to arrange in March. He almost called it off when he learned that during a public speaking engagement in Accra, Olympio, when asked about Boko, said "well, he seems to be plotting a coup." This outraged Boko. Such an accusation would only increase the risk that the GOT would try to harm him or his family. Nonetheless, Boko worked through intermediaries to arrange a meeting with Olympio. Boko wanted a formal meeting, with an agenda and specific things to discuss. "I wanted him to understand that this was business and that I wasn't going there to kiss his ring," he said. However, the effort came to naught when Olympio reportedly said, "well, I really don't want or need to see him." Boko indicated that he would not continue pursuing a meeting with Olympio for the time being.

THREATS

19. (C) Olympio's statement in Accra was not the only reason the GOT had increased threats against Boko, he said. At his February 4 meeting with the Togolese diaspora (ref A), Boko was questioned, by someone he later learned was an agent of the GOT, about the "Gilchrist Olympio passport affair" and

Togolese drug smuggling. Boko said he answered these questions but without revealing details. He explained to us that the Olympio passport issue involved a request in 2004 from Eyadema that Boko, as Interior Minister, issue Olympio a new passport. The problem was that Eyadema wanted Boko to use a scanned signature of Olympio's, and to create in effect a forged passport. (COMMENT: Boko did not elaborate on why Eyadema wanted Olympio to have this passport. END COMMENT.) Boko refused to issue the passport on the basis of the scanned signature. Instead, he asked the Togolese consulate in Paris to obtain a genuine signed passport application from Olympio that Boko later used to issue the passport. On the drug smuggling issue, Boko said that at the February 4 meeting, in response to the question, he explained evidence of drug smuggling in Togo without being specific.

¶10. (C) In March, in response to what Boko said at the February 4 meeting, a GOT-controlled journalist in Togo published an article denouncing Boko's "disclosure of state secrets" (i.e., his discussion of the Olympio passport affair

SIPDIS and the drug smuggling). The article accused Boko of further disclosing "state secrets" when he testified to French authorities investigating arms trafficking and the November 6, 2004, bombing of French forces in Cote d'Ivoire by the Ivoirian military. Boko said he interpreted this article as calling for his death. The article said that by revealing "state secrets," Boko had "violated an agreement he had made with France, Germany, and the United States when he left Togo after the April 2005 elections." Boko said he knew of no such "agreement." He was heartened, he said, when certain Togolese military officers subsequently distributed statements saying that if anything happened to Boko, they would retaliate against the journalist.

¶11. (C) Boko said that soon after, Togo's Foreign Minister paid a private call on Boko at his Paris law office, and beseeched him to "be quiet" and not "betray state secrets." Boko countered the accusations and said that he was now a private citizen engaged in legitimate political discourse who had never revealed state secrets. He told the Minister about the GOT agent who had asked the provocative questions at the February 4 meeting, and indicated he would not bow to Lome's threats.

¶12. (C) Also in March, Boko learned that a member of the Togolese security service was coming to France. According to contacts in Togo, this individual might be traveling to France to organize Boko's assassination. Boko said he had notified French authorities, who said they would keep watch over the individual. Several of Boko's friends agreed to observe him as well. The Togolese arrived and then immediately went to the South of France with a female French acquaintance, where they stayed for about two weeks. The French authorities provided the same information to Boko that his friends did, which Boko found reassuring.

PARIS 00002348 003.2 OF 003

THE FRENCH

¶13. (C) Boko said he meets sporadically with MFA AF A/S-equivalent Bruno Joubert to discuss his situation. Boko was ambivalent about the sincerity of Joubert's commitment to help him. He said that when the GOT issued a world-wide diplomatic note canceling Boko's diplomatic passport (ref A, para 8), the French MFA circulated the note with a cover letter to the immigration and customs services instructing them to seize Boko's diplomatic passport if he tried to use it in entering or leaving France. Boko was upset about this and confronted Joubert, asking "so now you are executing the instructions of the Togolese government?" Boko said that Joubert accepted his arguments, said it must have been a mistake, and made a few calls to remove Boko's passport from the black list. Boko continues to use the diplomatic

passport, as the GOT will not issue him a new civilian one.

¶14. (C) Boko said that he has also discussed with Joubert an apparent attempt by the GOT to obtain records of Boko's phone calls. He explained to Joubert that "I don't care if the French are listening to my calls," which he said Joubert emphatically denied was happening, but that he especially did not want the GOT to know the identities of his associates or confidants in Togo who would phone him, which would be very dangerous for those individuals. Joubert, according to Boko, assured him that the GOT would receive no GOF assistance in obtaining a record of Boko's phone calls.

¶15. (C) Boko said that, for now, he had not received further requests to testify in the arms smuggling case that French investigative judge Brigitte Raynaud had been pursuing before her recent move to another job (ref A, paras 3-5) Immediately after the press reported on his testimony, Boko said he complained to Raynaud about the apparent leaks on which the reports were based. She denied leaking the material to the press. However, Boko said that Raynaud indirectly indicated that the leaks "may have been made" in order for her to establish some public record of where she had taken the case before she changed jobs. Devoted to her cases, Raynaud wanted to make it difficult for them to disappear once she was no longer overseeing them. Boko believed that one reason Raynaud shifted to another job was because her investigations, which included other unrelated cases in Rwanda and Cote d'Ivoire, were making other elements of the GOF uncomfortable.

¶16. (C) COMMENT: Boko was quite insistent that if the U.S. flexed its muscles, Togo would cower and be more cooperative. He was a bit more direct at this meeting in labeling himself an opposition "leader" than he has been in the past. Although clearly troubled by the threats he believes are directed against him, Boko was calm in describing them. He indicated that exposure to some danger was among the lumps one has to take if one travels the road of an opposition leader in exile. END COMMENT.

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